1: DeLand O-4 (No date)1908 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

648 lower village brought down four of the Sharhas. We explained to them our intentions, and advised them to remain at peace with each other; we also gave them a flag, some tobacco, and a speech for their nation. These were accompanied by a letter to Messrs. Tabeau and Gravelines at the Ricara village, requesting them to preserve peace if possible, and to declare the part which we should be forced to take if the Ricaras and Sioux made war on those whom we had adopted. After distributing a few presents to the Sharhas and Mandans, and showing them our curiosities, we dismissed them, apparently well pleased at their reception." (id 187.)

776 **Mandan Religion—Origin.** "Tuesday, 4th. Oscapsaee and
782 two young chiefs passed the day with us. The whole religion of the Mandans consists in the belief of one great spirit presiding over their destinies. This being must be in the nature of a good genius, since it is associated with the healing art, and the great spirit is synonymous with the great medicine, a name also applied to every thing which they do not understand. Each individual selects for himself the particular object of his devotion, which is termed his medicine, and is either some invisible being or more commonly some animal, which henceforward becomes his protector or his intercessor with the great spirit; to propitiate whom every attention is lavished, and every personal consideration is sacrificed. 'I was lately owner of seventeen horses,' said a Mandan to us one day, 'but I have offered them all up to my medicine, and am now poor.' He had in reality taken all his wealth, his horses, into the plain, and turning them loose, committed them to the care of his medicine, and abandoned them forever. The horses, less religious, took care of themselves, and the pious votary traveled home on foot. Their belief in a future state
775 is connected with this tradition of their origin; the whole nation
773 resided in one large village under ground, near a subterraneous lake; a grape vine extended its roots down to their habitation, and gave them a view of the light; some of the most adventurous climbed up the vine, and were delighted with the sight of the earth, which they found covered with buffalo and rich with every kind of fruits; returning with the grapes they had gathered, their countrymen were so pleased with the taste of them that the whole nation resolved to leave their dull residence for the charms

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

each end of the drum. Lone Man sat in front of the drum dressed in his full ceremonial outfit, smoking his pipe, and eating of the pemmican placed before him. The altar was set up between the northeast and northwest posts of the lodge and so arranged that half was on each half of the lodge; that is, there would be two human skulls and two buffalo skulls, and two posts of the small four-post structure symbolic of the four posts of the universe, on each half of the lodge. The Bull Dancers' paraphernalia were on the four-post altar, and beneath it were the sharp-edged tools and splints to be used later in the torture feature of the ceremony (see Fig. 14).

The first act was the ceremonial transfer of Lone Man's pipe to the Okipa Maker to be used by him for the duration of the ceremony. Lone Man then called Hoita from his place to supervise the performance and to see that every detail of the dance, as given in the Dog Den Butte when he was in charge, was carried out.[17] The dance began within the Okipa lodge at once. At definite places in the dance, the drummers picked up the hide serving as a drum and moved it to the east by four stages. At midnight, when the dancing stopped, the drums were on the east side of the lodge. The fasters were expected to cry all night.

First day.—At daybreak the fasters turned their buffalo robes around so that the hair was on the outside and the head side of the robe was over their heads, imitating buffaloes. The three drummers[18] (Hoxka) came out of the Okipa lodge at sunrise, placed their rolled-up hide serving as a drum to the east side of the sacred cedar, and sat down back of the drum facing toward the entrance to the Okipa lodge. The two men with rattles next came out and sat down behind the drummers. When the drummers and rattlers were in their places, the Okipa Maker came out of the lodge dressed in an antelope hide with the head on,

17. Catlin says that Nu-mohk-muck-a-nah (Lone Man) left the ceremony and village after the transfer of the pipe (George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* [Philadelphia, 1857], p. 253). Maximilian says that Numank-Machana (Lone Man) officiates again on the fourth day of the ceremony (*Early Western Travels, 1748–1846*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites [Cleveland, 1906], XXIII, 333).

18. Maximilian reports six drummers: "Three of the men must strike in the direction of the river downwards, and three in the direction upwards" (*ibid.*, p. 325). Six drummers was the correct number according to tradition. The number was reduced after the smallpox epidemic of 1837.

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

worn like an apron. He wore the hair shed from a buffalo over his head and carried Lone Man's pipe and pemmican balls, which he placed on the ground in front of the drummers. Then he walked to the south side of the sacred cedar and stood on the buffalo skull he had previously placed there. Grasping the wooden planks inclosing the cedar with both hands and pressing his forehead against the wood, he asked Lone Man to hear him and send the people all they asked for, to bring the buffaloes near the villages, and to keep all bad luck away.

At the completion of the Okipa Maker's prayer and while he stood grasping the wooden inclosure, the drummers and rattlers began singing; this was the signal for the fasters to come out. They were dressed in their robes with the hair side out and hooked at each other in imitation of a herd of buffaloes as they danced toward the sacred cedar in a double line,[19] one line going to the east of the sacred cedar, the other to the west side. There they formed a straight line on the south side and danced forward and backward in front of the Okipa Maker, who continued his weeping, addressing the first Lone Man to help the people. When the drummers changed the song to one with a rapid tempo, the fasters and the Okipa Maker returned to the Okipa lodge, imitating a herd of buffaloes as they entered the lodge following the Okipa Maker.

The drummers, Okipa Maker, and fasters came out to dance four times the first day, and the procedure was the same on each occasion. They came out at sunrise, before noon, at mid-afternoon, and just before sunset.

Just before dark, after dancing outside had finished for the day, women brought willow firewood to the Okipa lodge, where it was placed in two piles on each side of the door. Women of the WaxikEna-Tamisik moiety placed theirs on the west side, while the other clans placed theirs on the east side. Male representatives of the two divisions of the tribe carried in the wood for the fire, since women were not permitted inside the lodge. The small boys and many of the young men left the Okipa lodge at the end of the first day, usually leaving from thirty to fifty fasters who intended to remain the entire four days without

19. Each half represented one of the moieties. The fasters were also symbolic of the animals held captive in Dog Den.

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

a bunch of sage in her lodge and rubbed her body after returning from the fields to cleanse herself from the spirits in the gardens. Years ago, it is said that, when this was done, worms came out of the women's bodies. The Corn bundle-owner walked through the gardens several times during the summer, carrying the pipe and singing the Corn songs.

When the weather was too hot, too cold, or too dry, all those with Corn medicine rights met, and the Goose Women's Society joined them to dance and pray. While the ceremony was in progress, people of each household brought presents and offered them for relief from the adverse weather.

Many women pledged a ceremony to the Corn if good crops were sent by the gods. A person making such a vow, first prepared an elkhide robe and paid the Corn Priest to officiate. When the time appointed for the offering came and after the crop was harvested, she carried the robe to her field, where she tied it to a cottonwood pole and covered the pole with corn on the ear until the pile reached nearly to the robe. The young men of the tribe were invited to come and charge the robe, the first one there taking it. At a signal, the young men searched for the meat under the pile of corn. The Corn bundle-owner received four things for his part in the ceremony. Many different women gave this ceremony each fall when the crops were abundant.

The Corn bundle-owner officiated whenever corn was sold to people of other tribes. It was thought that it must be done or the spirits in the corn might leave the Mandan and help the people who took the corn away. He dressed in his ceremonial outfit and "called back" the Corn Spirits.

Whenever a cache of stored corn was opened, four ears of corn were taken to the Corn bundle-owner as payment for his part in protecting the stored corn.

The order of Corn Priests is as follows:

1. Uses Head for Rattle
2. Brown
3. Pot
4. Bull Leg
5. Acting Foolish (OxinhEdE)
6. Foolish Man
7. Strong Arm
8. Raises Tail
9. Forearm Bone
10. Hunts His Enemy
11. Bull Standing on Land
12. WErukirihEri
13. Enemy
14. Sacred Cedar
15. Cedar Feather
16. Star
17. Head Comes Out
18. Water Bag
19. Coyote
20. Crow
21. WErukirihEri
22. Bloody Knife
23. Garden
24. Tree in Garden
25. Uses His Head for Rattle
26. HoxdEkE
27. Corn Grinder
28. Lying Down
29. Left-Hand Bull
30. Scabby
31. WErukirihEri
32. Crows Belt
33. Moves Slowly
34. Scattercorn
35. Mrs. Little Owl (present owner)

The many references to corn in the mythology express the significance of agriculture to this tribe. Archeological work in their prehistoric sites indicates that economically agriculture has played an important role in shaping the habits of these people. The primary factor in establishing villages at certain

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

Chapter XII

PEOPLE ABOVE CEREMONY

THE ceremony is called HapminakE, meaning "Day Boat" or "Day Traveler." At least five distinct Mandan bundle lines were in existence in 1837, represented by Arrowhead Earrings (custodian of the Okipa lodge), who sold to his daughter, Spring Woman, and her husband, who sold to Calf Woman, principal contributor of data on this ceremony; Bull Otter, who sold to his son, Clam Necklace, who sold to his son Ole Bull (still living); Short Bull, whose bundle was bought by his daughter, Diamond Snake, who sold to her son, Percy Baker (still living); Red Buffalo Cow, who sold to his daughter, Antelope Woman; Four Bears, who died during the smallpox epidemic of 1837 without making a sale, although one son dreamed of the Old Woman Above and dressed as a woman thereafter. This is a greater number of bundle lines than it was possible to identify for the Hidatsa villages. The Arrowhead Earrings bundle was inherited in the clan and was considered the principal or original bundle. The other bundles were sold from father to son.

The ceremony was performed to the Sun, Moon, and Old Woman Above, their mother. Some bundle lines included rites to Old Woman Above's daughter,[1] an evil spirit who was blamed for much of the tribe's misfortunes. The ceremony differs in function from most ceremonies in that it was performed to ward off misfortunes sent by these evil mythological gods. Other sacred beings are either neutral or helpful, but not so with the Sun or his sister. They were cannibals and brought miscarriages, insanity, twisted faces, droughts, death, and misfortunes to the people. Ceremonies were rites of appeasement. The Sun was a cannibal who brought death to members of war parties and carried their bodies to his mother's lodge above, where she prepared them for his meals. He would not, however, knowingly

1. Called Omahank-Chika by Maximilian (see *Early Western Travels, 1748–1846*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, XXIII [Cleveland, 1906], 302).

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

eat those he had sent dreams to or those who had his bundles and gave feasts or offerings of goods to him regularly. The presence of so many bundle lines, both original and secondary, surviving the smallpox of 1837, indicates the popularity of such bundles.

This was a very difficult bundle ceremony to secure information about. All tribal ceremonies were secret. The difficulty in securing information on this ceremony was based on fear of death. Calf Woman explained that, since she had joined the church and was not likely to sell rights in her other bundles four times, she was always willing to explain things in her other bundles. She had described everything Wilson and Lowie asked of her and never felt fear of the loss of good fortune.[2] She added:

> I showed you the masks yesterday that belonged in the Okipa ceremony. Of course, I smoked pine branches before I opened the bundle, but I always do that. I don't feel the same way about the Peope Above bundle. The Moon in the bundle doesn't worry me, but Sun is an evil spirit. He brought death to our warriors. My first husband was killed on the warpath even though his father and mother had a People Above bundle which together with my husband's sisters we would have had rights had he lived. So, you see, sometimes the Sun will even kill his own. It may be that the Sun had already blessed the enemy and adopted him as a son was why my husband was killed. This Old Woman Above is mean, but she is fair. Her daughter is evil; she causes men to leave their wives and little children; she causes insanity, fits, and feeblemindedness. People are always careful to follow the rules belonging to these bundles, or their neighbors blame them when someone breaks a leg or has a tree fall on him. I worried last night because I had promised to tell you the myth.

Wolf Chief expressed the same fears when asked to explain the Hidatsa ceremony to Woman Above. That there was a rich ritualism connected with these bundles is evident from isolated data appearing in other sacred myths. There are a number of qualified informants, but to date it has been impossible to secure complete information from them. Variations no doubt existed between villages and even in bundle lines within the same village, but this could not be determined, since such information was not obtainable from Calf Woman.

Bundle purchase followed the normal tribal pattern. The instruction was directly between seller and buyer, which, when completed, was followed by a medicine feast at the time the transfer was made. Attendance was limited to persons with

2. Gilbert L. Wilson and Robert H. Lowie.

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

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than skulls, which usually appear singly in refuse heaps, pits, or shallow graves.

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Women took an active part in these ceremonies. Calf Woman thought that it was because they did not want their gardens burned by Sun, who she said once tried to marry Waving Corn. (People never prayed to the sun to bring warm weather. When the winter was severe, they prayed to Lone Man of the Okipa to come as the south wind.) When he was refused, he came four times, and each time the plants withered. Women would fast at these shrines to save their crops and ask help for their men away on the warpath.

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

778 796 614 428 lodge. The principal officer of the Okipa was the Lone Man, who, traditionally, belonged to the WaxikEna clan. The rights to impersonate Lone Man were inherited through the WaxikEna clan. A buyer was assisted by his brothers and sisters, who became secondary owners in the bundle. Should the buyer die, a brother was entitled to officiate until a new owner was qualified. When the bundle-owner had no brothers, the sisters' husband was authorized to officiate by performing a ceremonial feast to the bundle until a qualified successor in the clan was selected. The bundle and office passed from a man to his sister's [607] son. A man could sell his rights in the office four times, but few sales were made in later years, since there were two separate bundle lineages representing the two villages built near Fort Clark which were adequate to meet ceremonial needs. In fact, one of these lineages died out shortly after 1837 and was never re-established. The Hoita lineage, though theoretically in the WaxikEna clan, was, in historic times, held temporarily by a member of the Tamisik clan.

778 621 Although villages were reported to be largely independent ceremonially, they were not entirely so. The three sacred turtle drums were kept by individual members of the WaxikEna clan at Nuptadi Village, one of the east-side villages of the Heart River group, and were borrowed by the other villages when the Okipa was to be performed. In later years when the tribe moved to Fort Clark, these drums were kept at the Upper Village situated near Deapolis. Each village was believed to possess its own complement of officers. There was, however, a certain amount of collaboration between villages when new officers were receiving training.

778 621 361 The sacred cedar was erected in each village if the village group had a complete complement of Okipa officers. It was the rule that, whenever a ceremony or organized social event was performed in the summer village, out of respect to Lone Man, whose body was represented by this inclosed post, the group [434] should dance once at this sacred shrine. On these occasions, gifts of robes or other clothing were placed over the cedar as an ● [782] offering to the Lone Man and became the property of the WaxikEna clan. The Mandan considered the entire open-circle area inclosing the sacred cedar sacred also. Even as late as

3: Will and Spinden E-5 (1905) 1906
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

which were pushed in as they burnt. This was done because the First Man told them they must never have a big fire after the day's cooking was done and showed them how it should be built. It recalls the sacred fire of the Muskogi and other tribes of the lower Mississippi. They declared that many of the every day customs were taught them thus and consequently they always did them a certain way,—thus Ochkih-Hedde taught them to tattoo themselves, and their first chief taught them to kill buffalo and to make shields.

The Mandans practiced penances and sacrifices, especially self-torture which they carried to great extremes. Their medicine or personal guardian spirit was acquired by three or four days fasting and self injury, after which the medicine, often an animal, appeared to the candidate in a dream. This ceremony was also taught to them by Ochkih-Hedde. No expedition or enterprise was undertaken without a liberal sacrifice to some supernatural being, either by offering valuable goods or by physical self-torture. Finger joints were frequently cut off as an offering to the gods and fasting was common as a propitiation. Often a day or more would be spent near one of the medicine scaffolds in groaning, praying and weeping. Lewis and Clarke relate that finger joints were also cut off as a sign of mourning, which Maximilian denies, and Catlin tells how such a sacrifice was a part of the catalogue of tortures in the great Okeepa dance. The custom of consecrating personal property is found here as among the neighboring tribes. A man could make his gun, his horse, his pipe and other similar articles medicine by going through certain ceremonies, most important of which was the giving of a feast. The feast[1] was announced by a public crier, a certain number of guests were invited, the invitations being originally little rods and later playing cards. The drum and rattle made the round of the company. Then the article was consecrated; if a gun, it was rubbed with meal several times, with soup, and lastly with fat, after which the feast took place.

There were many shrines and sacred articles among the Mandans, but judging from the accounts, the sacred bundles or

[1] Maximilian: p. 463.

3:Will and Spinden E-5 (1905) 1906
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

under two years old. These hides were worth ten to fifteen horses or sixty ordinary robes. No man could be of great importance in the tribe unless he had at one time owned one of them. Immediately on its acquisition the hide was hung up on a pole before the owner's lodge and consecrated to the Lord of Life, the sun, or the First Man. The ceremony of consecration was rather elaborate and was conducted by the shaman. A great mass of valuables, the collection of three or four years, was also offered or given away at the same time. The robe was either left suspended until it rotted away, or was taken down and cut into strips, one of which was worn by each member of the owner's family.

The Mandans seem to have had something in the nature of shrines and sacred images both natural and artificial. First among the artificial ones might be mentioned the Ark or Big Canoe which has already been described. This formed the central figure for most of the Mandan ceremonial dances. There was also the image of Ochkih-Hedde which hung before the medicine lodge; and there were similar images hanging before nearly every one of the other lodges, these were made of skin, branches and earth[1] and were intended to represent the Lord of Life and the First Man. Other shrine-like structures were built on the prairie. One of these is described by Maximilian.[2] "... Four poles are placed in a square, the two front ones garnished at the base with a pile of earth and sod. Between them are four buffalo skulls in a row, between the two back poles are twenty-six human skulls painted partly with red stripes, behind the whole are two knives fixed in the ground. The poles are surmounted by bundles of branches; on these again is a crest of pieces of sharp wood, the ends painted red. ... Sometimes on two of the poles are tied stuffed figures to represent the sun and moon, or the Lord of Life and the Old Woman Who Never Dies. Wild absinthe (wormwood) is attached by handfuls to the poles." These are probably the same things which Catlin mentions in connection with the burial customs.

Chief among the natural shrines was the medicine rock of

[1] Maximilian: p. 444. [2] Ibid., p. 460.

3: Will and Spinden E-5 (1905) 1906
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

778 which Lewis and Clarke, Henry, Catlin, and Maximilian all give
787 accounts. The Mandans told Lewis and Clarke that this rock, which was at three days march to the southwest, informed them of every thing to happen during the year and that they visited it every spring and sometimes in the summers.[1] The description which Maximilian gives of this rock seems worth repetition: "It is situated at two or three days from the village on the edge of the Cannonball River from which it is about one hundred paces. They say it is on the summit of a rather high hill, the top of which is level. It is marked by the footprints of men and other animals, dogs and travois. It is a sort of oracle. They offer it all sorts of valuable articles — knives, pipes, cloth. . . . When going to war they pass near and consult the stone. They approach it, weep, groan, smoke, and retire to a distance where they pass the night. Next day they take down on parchment what the stone shows. This painted parchment is carried to the village where the old men interpret it. Undoubtedly new figures are seen on the stone from time to time. Not far from this place was the ark where part of the nation was saved." The Minnetarees also had one of these medicine stones which was consulted in practically
778 the same way. One more of their natural sacred objects deserves mention; this was a lake some distance from their villages
782 where a great serpent, formerly a Mandan warrior, was said to reside. This serpent was a good genius and offerings of all sorts were thrown into the lake to procure his aid.

791 The shaman although mentioned occasionally is not described, nor are his powers well defined by any of the authorities. Maximilian remarked that there were shamans who gathered herbs and pretended to cure diseases and others who did tricks and conducted preparations for the ceremonies.

773 MYTHOLOGY:—Practically all material on Mandan mythology
539 comes from Maximilian who wrote down a large number of stories directly as they were told to him by a Mandan chief, Dipeuch. Catlin and Lewis and Clarke reinforce these with a few details. It is found by analysis of the myths given by Maximilian that two distinct, parallel, mythological stories of

[1] Lewis and Clarke: Feb. 21, 1805.

4: Lowie E-5 (1910-1911) 1913
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

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After this speech, Big-thief returned to his place. Then all the Kit-Foxes rose and brought presents of food to their fathers. Black-chest again selected Good-bear for his individual Father, but explains that this was not obligatory. Wounded-face was obliged to select a new father, for the one chosen by him in purchasing the Kit-Fox organization had been killed in battle; otherwise, he says he should have kept the same individual for his father in buying all the higher societies. On this occasion his choice fell on Little-crow, to whom he presented a kettleful of food as a token of his selection. Black-chest states that five of the fathers had been killed since the purchase of the Kit-Fox society.

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Black-chest says that on this occasion the River Women did not aid the purchasers, as both they and the latter had married. This obviously refers to the period of the fathers' entertainment, as the same informant mentions a contribution by this women's organization to the initial payment (see p. 303). On the other hand, the Black Mouths attended the performance and brought food for the sellers.

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At a height of about seven feet from the ground the fathers stretched a rawhide rope between the two rear main posts. To each end of the rope they attached a whip, and near its center they folded over it two red cloth sashes. These sashes were considered sacred. The wife of one of the buyers then rose, stripped naked and covering her genitalia with her hands, approached the rear of the fireplace. Rising on tiptoes, she seized one of the sashes, covered her nakedness again, pressed the sash to her breast and hung it up as before. Each one of the buyers' wives went through the same ceremony. During this performance the fathers were all singing. The women returned to their seats and put on their blankets. Each husband then said to his wife: "I will give you to my father, for I want his song. Perhaps he will pray for us, and it will be well for both of us."

575 [841] 837 432 527 [782]

Then the father and the woman offered to him went out together. Menstruating women were absolved from this performance, for they were not supposed to come to the lodge at all on such occasions. As a matter of fact, Black-chest says that only very few fathers availed themselves of the right surrendered to them, being generally afraid of ill luck if they did. The form, however, was gone through by each wife on each of the twenty nights. Black-chest's wife told her husband that Good-bear merely took her outside, faced west with her and said, "Daughter-in-law, stop and stand there." Then he prayed as follows: "My gods, my son has given me his wife. I wish that my daughter-in-law may always enjoy a long and happy life, and I ask you in behalf of my son that he may conquer his enemies." After this prayer he bade the woman go back, and both returned to the lodge.

4: Lowie E-5 (1910-1911) 1913
NQ17 Mandan NQ17
Hidatsa NQ14

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the pledger. Then the pledger's property and food were distributed among the members, and a general feast followed in conclusion of the ceremony.

Young Beaver said that when she and her comrades bought the Goose society they assembled outside the village and erected a long meat-rack. Along this each member had a place allotted to her, where she could hang up the dried meat and fat prepared by her. Then they called their mothers, and presented them with the food suspended from the rack. In addition, those who could afford it gave their mothers a horse apiece, while the poorer ones made gifts of calico cloth. On receiving these presents each mother put some "black medicine" (a root) into her daughter's mouth. In the fall the members put up a similar rack. One man, the corn-singer had the power — acquired by purchase — of passing along the rack from end to end, touching each portion of meat and singing mystery songs. In the spring or autumn any man or woman might give a feast to the society and otherwise pay them to perform for the benefit of his or her cornfields. On such occasions the host rose and passed from one member to another, and any one that owned some medicine put a little into his mouth, at the same time praying to the Corn in his behalf:—

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[782]

"tawi^{n}'hakehak', tē'ha hā'keharā makū'nista. nimā'mihe
"This is my grandson, long life for me give him. Your blankets
I'wakise ki'ritkāksō'ore."[1]
I made for you.

The last part of this prayer refers to the custom of piling up all the corn in one place and covering it with calico as an offering to the Corn. Then some boy would run up, strike the calico as though it were an enemy, and snatch it away.

The two or three hand-drums employed by the society were, according to the same informant, painted with representations of goose tracks.

Yellow-hair said that the women who initiated her and her associates into the Goose society were the comrades of the surviving White Buffalo women of today. At the transfer of the membership privileges, which took place, as stated by other informants, close to the meat-rack previously set up, the mothers sang four times. During the intermission between the songs, the food was given to the sellers. The horses to be paid were tied in a near-by coulée. After the fourth time, all the novices rose, and approached their aunts, who were holding sagebrush in their arms. The buyers took the sage and paid calico for it. Then they also received their Goose society head bands. When this performance had been completed, the women went back to the village. On the following day the novices danced from morning

[1] This prayer is in Mandan.

4: Lowie E-5 (1910-1911) 1913
NQ17 Mandan NQ17
Hidatsa NQ14

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till evening. The mothers came to the dance ground, and each one called her daughter to her lodge, feasted her, and presented her with a fine tanned robe and a sheepskin dress. Four days were spent in this way, then the new members stopped dancing. According to Yellow-hair, the Goose women were divided into two divisions, the members being distinguished by the use of white and dark head bands respectively, and having seats on opposite sides of the dance lodge. Each of the two young middle officers belonged to one of these divisions. Those wearing white head bands occupied the right-hand side for one entering the lodge, while the women with dark head bands sat on the left. One special officer, Calf-woman, served food to the Corn at every feast. She took a piece of meat and offered it to the Corn, saying, "You, Corn, eat this. I pray to you in order that the members of my society may live long."

M H [783]

In the winter preceding the attempt to purchase the Goose society made by Buffalo-bird-woman's group, Yellow-woman — possibly on account of a vision — desired to prepare a feast for the members of the Goose society. All the other members of her group assisted her by preparing some meat and fat. In the spring, when the geese came back from the east, the women set up a meat-rack. Then the woman whose prospective mother was leader of the Goose women hung up her meat, followed by the other women about to buy the society. Anyone that desired to give her mother a horse pledged herself to do so by fastening a stick to the meat. When the food had all been suspended, the men's societies were heard approaching. The Dogs came, blowing their whistles, and the Foolhardy Dogs, Foxes, and other organizations likewise appeared. The women cheered them in the manner termed *ĭ'rara'xke*, that is, by repeatedly pronouncing the syllable "la, la, la, la" with a rapid movement of the tongue. Each society appropriated one portion of side-ribs, leaving a blanket in its place. The buyers took pains to hide the best pieces of meat until after the men's societies had departed, in order to reserve them for their mothers. In the meantime the Goose women drummed and danced inside their lodge. The starter of the feast took a pipe and a piece of fat on a cottonwood stick, and ran all alone to the Goose society lodge. Each of the Goose women was holding in her left arm sagebrush about 5 feet long and wrapped round a long stick on which was impaled an ear of corn. The representative of the buyers placed the pipe before the singers. The pipe was smoked and returned, whereupon the delegate returned to the meat-rack. This procedure was repeated several times. All that day the buyers refrained from eating and drinking. The Goose women approached the meat-rack, halting several times and dancing each time. When they arrived at the place where the meat was suspended, they sat down in a circle and placed their sagebrush on the

4: Lowie E-5 (1910-1911) 1913
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Gun Society.

575 Hides-and-eats says that in the Gun society (Mandan: ĭ′rupe ŏ′xat'e) 607 there was no adoption. Three men who had guns for their personal medi- 535 cine went round the village, selecting young girls for the dance. The girls combed their hair loose, stuck feathers in the back like the Skunks,[1] put on their beaded belts and mountain-sheep dresses, and entered an earth-lodge, where they ranged themselves in the arc of a circle. The three men were seated between the fire and the screen between the two main poles facing the door; they were the singers and drummers. The girls danced up and down in their places, seating themselves when a song ended and rising to dance when a new one was intoned. At the close of each song one of the three men expressed the following prayer: "My sacred gun, I pray to you, I wish to conquer my enemies." One of the men rose, impaled food on a stick, and cast it into the fire as an offering to the guns. After a prayer, food that had been previously prepared was distributed among the members. This food must all be eaten on the spot; it was not permissible to take any of it away. At the close of the performance sweetgrass was placed on a potsherd with some charcoal and burnt for incense. One of the men went round with the sherd, beginning at the right side of the door, and smoked each member in turn.

Sometimes the dance was performed, not in an earth-lodge, but outdoors in the village. The Gun women danced only during one month in the summertime. The next year the three men selected other young girls or young married women for the performance.[2] The object of the ceremony was to prevent the recurrence of losses from the enemy.

From the statements quoted it appears doubtful whether the Gun "society" was really a society, though the same term *ŏ′xat'e* is applied to it as to the other organizations.

River Women Society.

575 The River Women society (pasa′′mĭ′he ŏ′xat'e) is called "Grass Crown society" (mikā′kikiĭ) by the Hidatsa.

The following origin legend had been heard by Hides-and-eats:

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[1] Maximilian says they wore eagle plumes.

[2] Big-cloud, Bull-horn, and White-young-bear are said to have reörganized this society before the time of the smallpox.

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one of their villages on the other side of Knife River, which frequently occasioned dissension between them, and it is only within these fourteen years that permanent peace and concord have existed between the two people.

At the time when our narrator was a young man, the Arikkaras were near and dangerous enemies to the Mandans. They often fought with them as well as with the Sioux. When one of the two allied nations fought alone, it was almost always defeated, but when they were combined they generally triumphed. The preceding long narrative throws, as I have said, much light on the actual condition of this people, and of their prevalent superstitious customs.

At the time of their first alliance with the Manitaries, the Mandans are said to have inhabited eight or nine villages on the two banks of the Missouri, on the Heart River, and higher upwards. Subsequently a great number of the Mandans were carried off by the small-pox, and their enemies, the Sioux, entirely destroyed their largest village, and massacred the inhabitants. The remaining population then collected in the two villages that still exist—Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kush and Ruhptare. Plate XVI. is a view of Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kush, of which a ground plan will be found at the end of this chapter. Previously to the devastations of the small-pox, the Sioux were not very dangerous enemies to the Mandans, because they lived at too great a distance from them, but the Chayennes and the Arikkaras were their natural adversaries. I shall now proceed to treat of the religious and superstitious practices which still prevail among them.

These Indians are full of prejudice and superstition, and connect all the natural phenomena with the before-mentioned silly creations of their own imaginations. They undertake nothing without first invoking their guardian spirit, or medicine, who mostly appears to them in a dream. When they wish to choose their medicine or guardian spirit, they fast for three or four days, and even longer, retire to a solitary spot, do penance, and even sacrifice joints of their fingers; howl and cry to the lord of life, or to the first man, beseeching him to point out their guardian spirit. They continue in this excited state till they dream, and the first animal or other object which appears to them is chosen for their guardian spirit or medicine. Every man has his guardian spirit. There is, in the prairie, a large hill where they remain motionless many days, lamenting and fasting; not far from this hill is a cave, into which they creep at night. The choice and adoration of their medicine are said to have been taught them by the strange man or spirit who appeared in their villages many years ago, and has not since been seen, and of whom mention has already been made by the name of Ochkih-Hadda. He is said also to have taught them the art of tattooing, and to have instituted their medicine feasts. In all natural phenomena, which are not of daily occurrence, they see wonders, and indications of favourable or unfavourable events. If the falling stars are numerous, or in a certain direction, it is to them an indication of war, or of a great mortality in the human race. They were not willing to have their portraits painted, because they alleged that they should soon die if their portraits came into other hands; at least they endeavoured to obtain the portrait of the painter as an antidote.

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This custom exists among most of the nations on the Missouri, and even among the Esquimaux there is a somewhat similar usage. If the adopted son and father have not happened to meet for a long time, they make presents to each other; the father gives the son a new dress, and the latter presents him with a good horse. Among all the Indian nations of North America, there is a particular class of men, who are specially engaged in all the above-mentioned ceremonies and medicines. They are, also, the physicians, and are called, among the Mandans, Numak-Choppenih, which signifies medicine man.

The skin of a white buffalo cow is an important article, and an eminent medicine in the opinion of the Mandans and Manitaries. He who has never possessed one of them is not respected. Suppose two men to be disputing about their exploits, the one an old veteran warrior, who has slain many enemies, the other, a young lad without experience; the latter reproaches the other with never having possessed a white buffalo cow hide, on which the old man droops his head, and covers his face for shame. He who possesses such a hide generally offers it to the lord of life, to whom he dedicates it, or, which is equivalent, to the sun, or to the first man. He collects, perhaps, in the course of a whole twelvemonth, various articles of value, and then hangs them up all together on a high pole in the open prairie, generally in the neighbourhood of the burying-place, or in the village before his hut. Distinguished men and chiefs of eminence are for the most part poor, because, in order to gain reputation and influence, they give away everything of value which they possess. A large number of relatives is one of the chief means of acquiring riches, for a young man who wishes to distinguish himself, and to be liberal, does honour to the whole family, who assist him to the utmost of their power. When one of his relations has anything of value, the young man goes to the owner to demand it, and not unfrequently takes it away without ceremony. Sometimes he hangs his head in silence, and then something of value is given him, a handsome dress, a horse, &c. If he wishes to gain reputation and a claim to distinction, it is necessary that he should make presents. All the people in the village notice very accurately what presents are made, and the donor has a right to display all such presents painted on his robes, and in this manner to hand down his reputation to posterity, as has been already related. This and military glory are, in the eyes of these men, the greatest virtues. They dare not draw a stroke too much on their robes for the horses, guns, &c., which they have given away, for the young men keep a most strict account against each other, and universal ridicule would be the immediate consequence of violating this rule. Among the distinctions of any man, the white buffalo hide is the greatest. He who has not been so fortunate as to kill a white buffalo himself, which is generally the case, as these animals are very rare, purchases a hide, often at a great distance from home, and other nations bring them hither, being well aware of the great value attached to them by the Mandans. The hide must be that of a young cow, not above two years old, and be taken off complete and tanned, with the horns,

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they hate me, therefore carry me to the long water, three days' journey from the Missouri." This, too, was done, but the serpent not liking his new abode, his comrade was obliged to carry him to a second lake, called Histoppa-Numangka (the place of the tattooed countenance), when the serpent was satisfied, and resolved to remain. He commissioned the young man to bring him four things, viz. a white wolf, a polecat, some pounded maize, and eagles' tails: after this he was to go to war four times, and kill an enemy in each combat. All this accordingly took place. The serpent then added that he would always remain in this lake, never die, be medicine, and, when the Mandans desired anything, they might come hither, do penance, or make offerings, that is to say, hang robes, eagles' tails, and other articles of value, on poles on the banks of the lake, which the Indians sometimes do even to this day.

Another curiosity of a similar nature is the Medicine Stone, which is mentioned by Lewis and Clarke, and which the Manitaries likewise reverence. This stone is between two and three days' journey from the villages on Cannon-ball River, and about 100 paces from its banks. I was assured that it was on a tolerably high hill, and in the form of a flat slab, probably of sand-stone. The stone is described as being marked with impressions of the footsteps of men, and animals of various descriptions, also of sledges with dogs. The Indians use this stone as an oracle, and make offerings of value to it, such as kettles, blankets, cloth, guns, knives, hatchets, medicine pipes, &c., which are found deposited close to it. The war parties of both nations, when they take the field, generally go to this place, and consult the oracle as to the issue of their enterprise. Lamenting and howling, they approach the hill, smoke their medicine pipes, and pass the night near the spot. On the following morning they copy the figures on the stone upon a piece of parchment or skin, which they take to the village, where the old men give the interpretations. New figures are undoubtedly drawn from time to time on this stone, near to which the celebrated ark, in which part of the nation was saved in the great deluge, formerly stood.

The Mandans have many other medicine establishments in the vicinity of their villages, all of which are dedicated to the superior powers. Mr. Bodmer has made very accurate drawings of those near Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kush, one of which consists of four poles placed in the form of a square; the two foremost have a heap of earth and green turf thrown up round them, and four buffalo skulls laid in a line between them, while twenty-six human skulls are placed in a row from one of the stakes at the back to the other; some of these skulls are painted with a red stripe. Behind the whole a couple of knives are stuck into the ground, and a bundle of twigs is fastened at the top of the poles with a kind of comb, or the teeth of a rake, painted red (Vignette XIV). The Indians repair to such places when they desire to make offerings or put up petitions; they howl, lament, and make loud entreaties, often for many days together, to the lord of life, which the French Canadians call weeping, though no tears are shed. A similar medicine establishment is represented in Plate XXV., where a couple of human figures, very clumsily made of skins,

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778 were fixed upon poles, representing, as we were told, the sun and moon, probably the lord of life
782 and the old woman who never dies. Wormwood, of which they generally fasten a bunch to the poles, is a sacred medicine herb, to which they ascribe various effects.

Dreams, as I have before said, afford the usual motives for such actions, and for the
787 penances which they impose upon themselves, and they believe all that appears in their dreams
782 to be true. They were not yet acquainted with fire-arms, when one of the Indians dreamt
789 of a weapon with which they could kill their enemies at a great distance, and soon after-
304 wards the white men brought them the first gun. In the same manner they dreamt of horses before they obtained any. Even the Whites who live among them are infected with this belief in dreams, and other superstitions. They frequently promise, on undertaking anything, the joint of a finger, which they cut off at once, and keep in a handful of wormwood; this I myself saw among the Blackfeet, where, at that time, it was a sign of mourning. It is also done at the time of the Okippe in May and June. Almost all the Mandans and Manitaries have lost one or two joints of the fingers, and several of them more. There are numerous superstitious ideas and prejudices among these Indians. Thus, they believe that a person to whom they wish ill must die, if they make a figure of wood or clay, substituting for the heart, a needle, an awl, or a porcupine quill, and bury the image at the foot of one of their medicine poles. When a child is born, the father must not bridle a horse, that is to say, he is not to fasten the halter to the lower jaw, otherwise the child would die in convulsions. If the wife be pregnant, this circumstance is often the cause of much ill fortune to the husband, and he is frequently unsuccessful in hunting. If an Indian, in such cases, wounds a buffalo, without being able to kill it quickly, he endeavours to carry the heart of a buffalo home, and makes his wife discharge an arrow at
777 it; he then again feels confidence in his weapons, that they will speedily kill. The Indians affirm that a pregnant woman is very lucky at a game called billiards. Many consider it a bad omen when a woman, while several Mandans are smoking together, passes between them. If a woman is lying on the ground between the men who are smoking, a piece of wood is laid across
789 her, to serve as a communication between the men. The strongest man now living among the
555 Mandans, who has been the victor in several wrestling matches with the Whites, always takes hold of his pipe by the head, for, were he to touch it in another part, the blood would suddenly rush from his nostrils. As soon as he bleeds in this manner, he instantly empties his pipe, and throws the contents into the fire, where it explodes like gunpowder, and the bleeding immediately stops. Nobody, they say, can touch this man's face, without at once bleeding at the nose and mouth. A certain Indian affirms that, whenever another offers him a pipe to smoke, out of civility, he immediately has his mouth full of worms, handfuls of which he throws into the fire. The medicine of another man consists in making a snow-ball, which he rolls a long time between his hands, so that it at length becomes hard, and is converted into a white stone, which, when

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stake their liberty upon the issue of these games, offering themselves as slaves to their opponents in case they get beaten.

Feasting and *fasting* are important customs observed by the Mandans, as well as by most other tribes, at stated times and for particular purposes. These observances are strictly religious and rigidly observed. There are many of these forms practiced amongst the Mandans, some of which are exceedingly interesting, and important also, in forming a correct estimate of the Indian character; and I shall at a future period take particular pains to lay them before my readers.

Sacrificing is also a religious custom with these people, and is performed in many different modes, and on numerous occasions. Of this custom I shall also speak more fully hereafter, merely noticing at present, some few of the hundred modes in which these offerings are made to the Good and Evil Spirits. Human sacrifices have never been made by the Mandans, nor by any of the north western tribes (so far as I can learn), excepting the Pawnees of the Platte; who have, undoubtedly, observed such an inhuman practice in former times, though they have relinquished it of late. The Mandans sacrifice their fingers to the Great Spirit, and of their worldly goods, the best and the most costly; if a horse or a dog, it must be the favourite one; if it is an arrow from their quiver, they will select the most perfect one as the most effective gift; if it is meat, it is the choicest piece cut from the buffalo or other animal; if it is anything from the stores of the Traders, it is the most costly—it is blue or scarlet cloth, which costs them in this country an enormous price, and is chiefly used for the purpose of hanging over their wigwams to decay, or to cover the scaffolds where rest the bones of their departed relations.

Of these kinds of sacrifices there are three of an interesting nature, erected over the great medicine-lodge in the centre of the village—they consist of ten or fifteen yards of blue and black cloth each, purchased from the Fur Company at fifteen or twenty dollars per yard, which are folded up so as to resemble human figures, with quills in their heads and masks on their faces. These singular-looking figures, like "*scare crows*" (PLATE 47), are erected on poles about thirty feet high, over the door of the mystery-lodge, and there are left to decay. There hangs now by the side of them another, which was added to the number a few days since, of the skin of a white buffalo, which will remain there until it decays and falls to pieces.

This beautiful and costly skin, when its history is known, will furnish a striking proof of the importance which they attach to these propitiatory offerings. But a few weeks since, a party of Mandans returned from the Mouth of the Yellow Stone, two hundred miles above, with information that a party of Blackfeet were visiting that place on business with the American Fur Company; and that they had with them a white buffalo robe for sale. This was looked upon as a subject of great importance by the chiefs, and one worthy of public consideration. A white buffalo robe is a

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782 439 great curiosity, even in the country of buffaloes, and will always command an almost incredible price, from its extreme scarcity; and then, from its being the most costly article of traffic in these regions, it is usually converted into a *sacrifice*, being offered to the Great Spirit, as the most acceptable gift that can be procured. Amongst the vast herds of buffaloes which graze on these boundless prairies, there is not one in an hundred thousand, perhaps, that is white; and when such an one is obtained, it is considered great *medicine* or mystery.

On the receipt of the intelligence above-mentioned, the chiefs convened in council, and deliberated on the expediency of procuring the white robe from the Blackfeet; and also of appropriating the requisite means, and devising the proper mode of procedure for effecting the purchase. At the close of their deliberations, eight men were fitted out on eight of their best horses, who took from the Fur Company's store, on the credit of the chiefs, goods exceeding even the value of their eight horses; and they started for the Mouth of the Yellow Stone, where they arrived in due time, and made the purchase, by leaving the eight horses and all the goods which they carried; returning on foot to their own village, bringing home with them the white robe, which was looked upon by all eyes of the villagers as a thing that was vastly curious, and containing (as they express it) something of the Great Spirit. This wonderful anomaly laid several days in the chief's lodge, until public curiosity was gratified; and then it was taken by the doctors or high-priests, and with a great deal of form and mystery consecrated, and raised on the top of a long pole over the *medicine-lodge;* where it now stands in a group with the others, and will stand as an offering to the Great Spirit, until it decays and falls to the ground.

000 This Letter, as I promised in its commencement, being devoted to some of the customs peculiar to the Mandans, and all of which will be new to the world, I shall close, after recording in it an account of a laughable farce, which was enacted in this village when I was on my journey up the river, and had stopped on the way to spend a day or two in the Mandan village.

789 Readers, did you ever hear of "*Rain Makers?*" If not, sit still, and read on; but laugh not—keep cool and sober, or else you may laugh in the *beginning*, and cry at the *end* of my story. Well, I introduce to you a new character—not a *doctor* or a *high-priest*, yet a *medicine-man*, and one of the highest and most respectable order, a "*Rain Maker!*" Such dignitaries live in the Mandan nation, aye, and "*rain stoppers*" too; and even those also amongst their *conjurati*, who, like Joshua of old, have even essayed to stop the sun in his course; but from the inefficiency of their medicine or mystery, have long since descended into insignificance.

Well, the story begins thus:—The Mandans, as I have said in a former Letter, raise a great deal of corn; and sometimes a most disastrous drought will be visited on the land, destructive to their promised harvest. Such

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outer surface until after the Deluge. When an Indian story is told, it is like all other gifts, "to be taken for what it is worth," and for any seeming inconsistency in their traditions there is no remedy; for as far as I have tried to reconcile them by reasoning with, or questioning them, I have been entirely defeated; and more than that, have generally incurred their distrust and ill-will. One of the Mandan doctors told me very gravely a few days since, that the earth was a large tortoise, that it carried the dirt on its back—that a tribe of people, who are now dead, and whose faces were white, used to dig down very deep in this ground to catch *badgers;* and that one day they stuck a knife through the tortoise-shell, and it sunk down so that the water ran over its back, and drowned all but one man. And on the next day while I was painting his portrait, he told me there were *four tortoises,*—one in the North—one in the East—one in the South, and one in the West; that each one of these rained ten days, and the water covered over the earth. 773

These ignorant and conflicting accounts, and both from the same man, give as good a demonstration, perhaps, of what I have above mentioned, as to the inefficiency of Indian traditions as anything I could at present mention. They might, perhaps, have been in this instance however the creeds of different sects, or of different priests amongst them, who often advance diametrically opposite theories and traditions relative to history and mythology.

And however ignorant and ridiculous they may seem, they are yet worthy of a little further consideration, as relating to a number of curious circumstances connected with the unaccountable religious ceremonies which I have just described

The Mandan chiefs and doctors, in all their feasts, where the pipe is lit and about to be passed around, deliberately propitiate the good-will and favour of the Great Spirit, by extending the stem of the pipe *upwards* before they smoke it themselves; and also as deliberately and as strictly offering the stem to the four *cardinal points* in succession, and then drawing a whiff through it, passing it around amongst the group. 782 788

The *annual religious ceremony* invariably lasts *four* days, and the other following circumstances attending these strange forms, and seeming to have some allusion to the *four* cardinal points, or the "four tortoises," seem to me to be worthy of further notice. *Four* men are selected by Nu-mohk-muck-a-nah (as I have before said), to cleanse out and prepare the medicine-lodge for the occasion—one he calls from the *north* part of the village—one from the *east*—one from the *south*, and one from the *west*. The *four* sacks of water, in form of large tortoises, resting on the floor of the lodge and before described, would seem to be typical of the same thing; and also the *four* buffalo, and the *four* human skulls resting on the floor of the same lodge—the *four* couples of dancers in the "bull-dance," as before described; and also the *four* intervening dancers in the same dance, and also described. 796 801